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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8497
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//JF/UNMA//
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J3//
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFIUU/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUMICEA/JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFIUU/COMSOCCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2263
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2474
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 5579
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 1105

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 000806

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR SA/FO (AMB MQUINN), SA/A, SA/PAB, S/CT,
EUR/RPM, INL
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND
OSD FOR BREZINSKI
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD
REL NATO/AUST/NZ/ISAF

E.O. 12958 N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SNAR](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: PRT/LASHKAR GAH - POPPY ERADICATION PLANS
TAKING SHAPE

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The GOA's Afghan Eradication Force (AEF) will participate in Helmand's opium poppy eradication campaign, due to commence within the next 10 days. Helmand Governor Daud and Prosecutor Sattar Khan cited "constitutional requirements" to provide specific alternative development assistance to farmers whose fields are eradicated. Governor Daud reiterated the need for significant assistance in security as well as the "immediate" need for cash for work and/or food for work in the poorest areas of Helmand. The provincial government estimates that 48,000 farmers will require assistance. The Governor provided visiting US and UK embassy officials with provincial plans for assistance and eradication, which coincidentally appeared during the meeting. Next steps are high level meetings in Kabul to finalize eradication plans. At a working lunch, Provincial Council members said that unfulfilled government promises of assistance are behind the increased cultivation and are contributing to driving citizens closer to the Taliban. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) As part of the ongoing process to synchronize poppy eradication plans, senior US and UK embassy counternarcotics officials met with Governor Daud and other provincial officials on February 18. Unlike at previous, similar sessions, the local television station filmed the meeting and

the working lunch that followed.

AEF SHOULD PARTICIPATE

13. (SBU) Doug Wankel, director of the US Embassy counternarcotics Task Force, told Governor Daud and other officials that the AEF should be deployed to enhance this year's eradication effort. They are 400 strong, well trained, and anxious to lend a hand. He also remarked that not employing the force would raise questions in Washington. Wankel told the Governor that Combined Forces Command/A was standing by to ensure necessary support. Wankel suggested that the AEF, while independent, would accept a provincial liaison officer whose role would be to keep the governor informed on a daily basis of ongoing field activities. The governor appeared to agree with this approach. Wankel further reported that coordination efforts among the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior -MOI - (AEF is under the MOI), and Ministry of Counternarcotics were ongoing. (Note: During the meeting, Wankel confirmed a meeting for Sunday, February 19. He invited the governor to fly back to Kabul with him following the meeting and luncheon. The governor accepted this invitation. End Note.)

CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE?

14. (SBU) For the first time over the past few weeks of poppy eradication discussions, the governor, through Prosecutor Sattar, brought up a potential

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legal issue concerning eradication. The prosecutor exhibited a book, which he said represented the law concerning poppy eradication. He claimed that, according to the law, the government was required to provide specific alternative development assistance to farmers whose poppy was eradicated. Wankel said that the GOA has a new counternarcotics law superseding the one that the prosecutor quoted (Sattar admitted that the law from which he quoted was three years old). Further, Wankel said that he was unaware of any such quid pro quo in the new law. He also reminded the officials that, under Afghanistan's constitution, opium poppy cultivation is illegal.

BEATING THE DRUM FOR ASSISTANCE

15. (SBU) As he has at previous meetings (reftels), the governor reiterated the need for assistance to poor farmers who have little land. He said that he had directed the MRRD office to prepare a plan for "immediate, mid-term, and long-term needs." (Note: During the meeting, MRRD director Mullah Omar actually delivered the plans and handed them over to the governor - with cameras rolling. End Note). The governor said that, "presuming this assistance, I am hopeful that we will have a smooth eradication campaign." He cited MRRD as concluding that there were some 48,000 farmers in need of immediate assistance, assuming a robust eradication campaign. (Note: At the local cash for work rate of USD four per day, this is clearly financially and logistically unrealistic. End Note.) Wankel told the governor that, while the US and UK were concerned and supportive of immediate assistance, neither they nor the GOA saw a "direct correlation" between eradication and compensating an individual farmer. He also cited the need for Helmand

officials and citizens to do their part, citing the growing rate of heroin abuse and its detrimental effect on society.

¶6. (SBU) Continuing the theme of the need for immediate assistance, Provincial Council (PC) chairman Mohammed Anwar said during the working lunch that, while he agreed on the need for eradication, "we need to help the farmers." Another PC member said that if poor farmers lost their entire poppy crop, not only would they be impoverished, but they would be more likely to be sympathetic to the Taliban and work against the government. He added that people are planting more poppy because in previous years, promises of government assistance if they planted less went unfulfilled. Deputy Chairman Urzghani said that, without some assistance in place, if significant eradication is carried out this season, "many poor farmers will suffer."

COMMENT

¶7. (SBU) The next step appears to be senior level

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discussions in Kabul to fine tune eradication plans. Governor Daud is a crucial part of that process. While US and UK officials are trying to incorporate his views, it is clear that the eradication train has left the station. Governor Daud continues to demonstrate a sharp political instinct. The dramatic entrances of officials bearing plans, along with his incorporating the PC in the process, all filmed for the local (and potentially national) broadcast media, appeared to be an attempt to please both local constituents as well as the diplomatic community.

NEUMANN